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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes high school students' leadership roles and experiences during an urban school's restructuring. For the study, interviews, focus groups, documentation of meetings and activities, document analysis, and the involvement of students were considered. The report emphasizes the roles that students played within the school and why; who the students were who tended to get involved; how students were involved in the restructuring; and how students, teachers, and administrators viewed this involvement. Four conclusions are discussed: natural tensions that occurred based on differences inherent in students', teachers', and administrators' roles; the role of the building leader and how participation is defined and orchestrated by that person; the factors beyond the building-level leadership that also influenced student involvement, such as readiness of students, apathy, the need for coordination of efforts, teacher readiness, and clear understanding of boundaries; and the realization that simply involving all partners in decision-making does not guarantee that educational processes will improve. The paper addresses factors surrounding this type of restructuring, such as curriculum and philosophy, rationales for involving students, and what it might take for schools to become democratic communities. (Contains 63 references.) (RJM)

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STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND RESTRUCTURING: A CASE STUDY

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Student Leadership and Restructuring: A Case Study

Cynthia J. Reed

Abstract

This study took place at an urban high school where groups of students in the school were provided with leadership development opportunities, then were involved in dialogues with teachers and administrators about school restructuring. Approximately 38% of the student population students received leadership training. The intent of this research was to offer insights into individuals' experiences of this phenomenon so that others may consider implications of involving students in restructuring dialogues and how student involvement could influence key stakeholders. Through interviews, focus groups, documentation of meetings and activities, document analysis, and the involvement of student-researchers, this research considered: roles that students played within the school and why; who the students were that tended to get involved; how students were involved in restructuring; what was being done to build capacity for student involvement; and how students, teachers, and administrators viewed this involvement.

Four conclusions are discussed in this paper. First, there appeared to be natural tensions that occurred based on differences inherent in students', teachers', and administrators' roles, both in terms of individual's views regarding their responsibilities as well as others' expectations of them. Although there was no one student, teacher, or administrator voice, there were areas of common struggle for each of these groups. Implied within these discussions are three issues: 1) how "empowered" each group felt and their willingness to empower others; 2) tensions that occurred as long-standing policies and practices were called into question; and 3) on a more fundamental level, core beliefs about what is legitimate knowledge, who has it, and how it should be manifested.

The second conclusion addresses the role of the building leader and how participation is defined and orchestrated by that person. During the two years of this study, there were three different building level leaders, each with their own approaches toward student involvement. Consequently, the level of student and teacher involvement varied greatly throughout the study, as did the prevailing attitudes toward this involvement.

Third, there were a number of factors beyond the building level leadership that also influenced student involvement including: readiness of students, apathy, the need for coordination of efforts, teacher readiness, and clear understandings about role boundaries. The fourth conclusion reminds us that simply involving all partners in decision-making is no guarantee that

educational processes will improve. Student involvement did not become "institutionalized" in a consistent way as evidenced by the differing approaches that each of the building level leaders had toward it. Therefore, the school was not recultured (Fullan, 1997). Students did, however, contribute meaningfully in several ways by offering keen insights, energy, and enthusiasm; encouraging a "buy in" to school policies and procedures for themselves and other students; encouraging tolerance of others' views; and assisting with the collection, analysis, and sharing of data from other students throughout the school.

Finally, the discussion section addresses questions about implications for schools considering this type of restructuring initiative including: curriculum and philosophy considerations, thoughts about the rationale for involving students, and what it might take for schools to become democratic communities. This study was about power – who had it and who did not. This restructuring initiative attempted to redistribute power so that it was shared throughout the school community. Although there were limited examples of when this occurred, for the most part, power was retained by the school principal and a few teacher leaders. In the few instances when students did have real power, it was generally those who were from privileged situations who assumed the role of leader.

Introduction

This study took place in a racially and ethnically mixed urban high school of approximately 1,300 students. Considered one of the best urban high schools in the nation--in 1996 it was named one of 266 Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education -- this school nevertheless experienced problems in recent years. There had been fights, racial tensions, and problems with gangs. Academic tracking was practiced at the school and perceptions about the quality of education that students received was greatly influenced by a student's academic placement (Bechtel et al., 1995).

The school began a three-year restructuring effort in the summer of 1995, with the help of a local foundation grant. An initial intent of this restructuring initiative was to expose institutional barriers to learning so that they could be addressed. A framework of exploring "what works" and "what doesn't work" was adopted. Implied within this conception of restructuring was a redefinition of roles and responsibilities for all participants in the school community. One primary way of seeking to accomplish this was through the development of student leaders. In this study, student leadership development was defined in the foundation grant proposal as a "capacity building activity" that enhances the involvement of students in school restructuring efforts. By redefining roles and responsibilities, there was also an implication of working toward the development of the school as a democratic community. This notion was reinforced through the goal of this restructuring effort--to live up to the school's mission of "preparing all students to become thinking, responsive, productive, and caring citizens."

As part of this effort, a partnership was formed. "The Partnership," as it was called, consisted of representatives from all stakeholder groups in the school community, including school administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and students. The students in The Partnership represented all three academic programs and came from various student leadership groups within the school. When selecting students to participate in leadership activities and training sessions, students were selected in several ways: a) teachers recommended students; b) students recommended themselves; and c) the Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities looked for students "on the fringe" and invited them to become involved. The process of selection varied for each of the student leadership groups, as did the student population within those groups. Efforts were made to encourage diversity within most of these student leadership groups, and some of them were well balanced in terms of grade level, gender, academic program, race, neighborhood, and attitudes toward the school. Not all of the student leaders were straight A students--some were

former gang members, and many had been in trouble at one point or another. Perhaps the single unifying feature of these students was that they were not afraid to speak their mind.

The first year of the restructuring effort focused on planning. Planning activities included a two-day August 1995 retreat to initiate the process, subsequent planning meetings throughout the school year, site visits to innovative schools, staff development, and discussions about instituting block scheduling. At this point there were three sub-committees of "The Partnership": a) roles and responsibilities, which re-examined expectations for all stake-holder groups; b) sharing and nurturing, which sought to develop a more caring school community ethos; and c) the communication sub-committee, which examined ways to improve communication through the school community.

At the end of the first year of this initiative, the building principal, a driving force behind the involvement of students in restructuring dialogues, retired and accepted a position at a neighboring university. One of the three assistant principals stepped in as interim principal until the end of January. She was also a supporter of student involvement in restructuring initiatives and had participated in the planning efforts of the previous year. When the new principal took office, the interim principal was transferred to another high school due to budgetary problems in which the district was enmeshed. The new principal, although verbally supportive of student involvement in school issues, was not used to the level of student empowerment that was beginning to take place. The high school where he had previously been assistant principal had more traditional involvement for students, such as through student councils. So within two years, there were three different building level leaders, each with differing views about the school and how the restructuring initiatives should operate.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how students, teachers, and administrators experienced student involvement in this restructuring initiative, to consider questions raised by these efforts, and to consider lessons that could be learned from these attempts. Education is a complex system, therefore, any meaningful changes to this system must allow for the inherent complexity in the system. Quick fixes will not last. Meaningful changes must shake the very foundations of our ingrained vision of schooling, and break away from preconceived notions. Changing the culture of a school involves creating new meaning, new consciousness. This paper suggests one way that schools might *begin* to develop a new consciousness--the involvement of student perceptions in discussions about the restructuring process. Yet, it reminds us that simply involving multiple voices in dialogues without readying the organization for the tensions and changes in roles and relationships will not provide any lasting reculturing of the school.

Theoretical Framework

This section is framed through four inter-related areas: 1)research on restructuring; 2) curriculum and philosophy considerations; 3) rationales for involving students in dialogues about restructuring initiatives; and 4) schools as democratic communities.

Restructuring

The restructuring movement can generally be seen to encompass three strands: changing the structure of schooling, changing roles and responsibilities, and changing the culture of schools. Suggested structural changes usually include decentralization, shared decision making, flexible scheduling, teacher teaming and school choice (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Elmore (1990) argues that reformers like to change structures in part because of their belief that structures exercise a powerful influence over the education system. Elmore (1990) argues that it may make more sense to change the norms of schools first, and then create new structures to accommodate these new norms, while Sarason (1982) argues that reformers need to change the regularities within schools in order to effect lasting change. Regularities are those events which repeatedly occur in schools, those events which are "taken-for-granted." The most important regularities are those involving teacher-student interactions. Involving students in restructuring challenges the regularity of students as passive, information receivers.

Murphy (1991) notes that redefining roles is one of the themes of restructuring. He argues that new roles include the view of student as active and involved in his/her own learning, of teacher as a professional, and of administrator as instructional leader. Newmann (1991) suggests that teachers take on new roles as coaches, facilitators, advisors and decision-makers.

Proponents argue that restructuring schools means that all members of the school community must re-evaluate their present roles and responsibilities as well as basic assumptions about the purpose of education. Rather than simply rearrange the coercive bureaucratic structures that frame how schools are run, there needs to be a new organizational structure. There needs to be a move away from emphasizing the hierarchical relationships that currently exist, while moving toward an emerging concept of valuing the opinions and ideas of all members of the school community (Fullan and Miles, 1992). Over the past decade there has been a move toward increased collaboration with stakeholders in public education: parents, community members, administration, and teachers. As more people become involved in the process of discussing what schools should be, fresh perspectives emerge about schools and schooling, offering creative insights into problems that are faced. Fullan (1997) suggests that no meaningful changes will last if reculturing does not occur.

Curriculum and Philosophy Considerations

Student involvement as partners implies that there is a valuing of identity, worth, and possibility within the school. To be partners, students must be viewed as having legitimate knowledge and skills to contribute (Sergiovanni, 1994). This suggests that there should be an orientation toward constructivist beliefs and/or practices within the school and raises questions about the "relationship between power and knowledge, learning and empowerment, and authority and human dignity" (Giroux, 1990, p. 383). Whereas "typically, the adult bureaucratic values of control, efficiency, and accountability set the climate and tone for teaching and learning in schools" (Weston, 1997, p. 165), student involvement suggests that other voices are also valued.

Students are usually the intended beneficiaries of restructuring efforts, yet these same efforts tend to exclude student voices. Many educational reforms are aimed at actively involving students in their education, but educators are designing changes for students without offering them an active role in the change process itself. This suggests an inconsistency between the stated goals of reform and the processes for attaining these goals, typical of the "control, efficiency, and accountability mindset" dominating most public schools. By engaging students in the process, we are signaling to them that their ideas are important, that they have legitimate knowledge, and that our expectations are for them to be active participants rather than passive voyeurs.

Nieto (1994) in her study of urban youth found that "the very act of speaking about their schooling experiences seemed to act as a catalyst for more critical thinking about them" (p.420). If the purpose of schooling is to encourage thinking about learning, then involving students in discussions about school reorganization works toward accomplishing this goal. In Nieto's study, many students were likely to be disengaged from their learning, at least initially. By entering into discussions about what to change, students began to consider what aspects of their learning they valued most and offered insights about why curricula was irrelevant or culturally offensive. The process helped to illuminate the policies and practices that cause roadblocks for many students. "If we understand school policies and practices as being enmeshed in societal values, we can better understand the manifestations of these values in schools as well" (Nieto, 1994, p.394). Changing the culture of a school necessitates a thorough self-examination of societal influences, and the courage to begin changing those influences which are harmful to children. Giving students a voice in restructuring efforts helps everyone to view roles and responsibilities differently.

Sizer (1992) suggests that students take on greater responsibilities within schools, that students can and need to be trusted with responsibilities, and that these responsibilities will encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Rather than having an

emphasis on efficiency, orderliness, and bureaucracy, students as partners, if it is an idea that is ingrained within the school, implies that there is an emphasis on shared meaning making and "real" learning. This was an ideal that the initial principal of the school hoped to accomplish.

The stated intent of the restructuring initiative at this school, to identify institutional barriers to learning, implies an emancipatory perspective which seeks to identify and eliminate aspects of schooling that devalue and repress groups. The intent of the restructuring initiative seeks to challenge the status quo and to begin to break down the institutional barriers that hinder change. Student voices can help "..discern the hidden structures of classism, racism, and sexism, among others, that serve to limit their possibilities and undermine efforts to realize self-worth. Thus, student voice contains within it the seeds of social, as well as intellectual, activism" (Weston, 1997, p. 167). If a purpose of the reform effort is truly to attempt to break away from hierarchical relationships, then involving students throughout the reform initiative is one way to demonstrate that adults are serious about changing roles and relationships. To begin to understand the societal forces that predicate (and then eradicate) the coercive bureaucratic schooling system currently in place, we need to eliminate the unidirectional communication between adults and students. Telling the stories of those previously silenced can thus be encouraged. As noted above, the very culture of our schools must be closely examined if true structural changes are to be made. This could happen when the fresh perspectives of students are included in the dialogue on school reform.

Rationale for involving students

Despite talk of involving stakeholders in restructuring, students rarely have more than token representation in change efforts--even though schools are students' workplaces. "Interestingly, their views of teaching, learning, and the school as a workplace match remarkably well those of contemporary theorists concerned with learning theory, cognitive science, and the sociology of work" (Phelan, Davidson, and Cao, 1992, p. 696). But "when adults do think of students, they think of them as potential beneficiaries of change. They think of achievement results, skills, attitudes, and jobs. They rarely think of students as participants in a process of change and organizational life" (Fullan and Miles, 1992, p. 751). Research suggests numerous reasons for involving students in dialogues about school restructuring. These tend to fall into four basic domains: 1) the learning environment and educational processes; 2) psychological and emotional issues; 3) functional concerns; and 4) political concerns (see Table One).

Learning Environment and Processes. Student involvement in the change process is important for many reasons. The goals of restructuring often include actively involving students in their education through incorporation of constructivist learning theory in instruction. However, in

most instances in school reform, educators are designing changes for students without offering them an opportunity to actively construct knowledge about the changes themselves (Reed & Bechtel, 1997). Thus, the restructuring process when dominated by adults assumes a behaviorist approach to learning and is inconsistent with constructivist goals of restructuring. Involving students in discussions about their own school experiences provides a consistency of purpose with constructivist teaching practices (Murphy & Hallinger, 1993; O'Laughlin, 1995).

Villa and Thousand (1992) identify three reasons for involving students in collaborative research roles with adults, which can be extrapolated to involving students in restructuring. Since educational reform efforts suggest that students need to exercise higher-level thinking skills to contribute to their learning, involvement in restructuring provides opportunities to exercise these skills (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Nieto, 1994). Further, collaborating with adults about learning helps students to "develop the ethic and practice of contributing to and caring for a greater community and society" (Villa & Thousand, 1992, p. 104). Finally, teaming is the most effective way to survive the information explosion we continue to undergo. By modeling collaboration, shared decision-making, and instructional power with students, educators can help students to develop these teaming skills that are needed in today's society.

> Engaging people in action planning for a change that will affect them is essential. Participatory planning encourages individuals' ownership for the coming changes, and it helps people to prepare for them by getting them to believe that change really will occur. Planning is an alarm signaling to everyone that things no longer will be the same (Villa and Thousand, 1995, p. 74).

Finally, Newman (1992) suggests that when students are encouraged to actively participate in their own education, attendance improves as does discipline (Furtwengler, 1996; Hill, 1996; Newman, 1992).

Table One. Reasons for Involving Students in Restructuring: Four Domains

Domain	Evidence
Learning Environment and Processes	Consistency of purpose with constructivist teaching practices (Murphy & Hallinger, 1993; O'Laughlin, 1995) Encourages application of higher level thinking (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Nieto, 1994) Helps educators gain a better understanding of student experiences (Dahl, 1995; Nieto, 1994) Working with adults can offer role models to help students learn to work with others (Villa & Thousand, 1995) Involving students in planning for changes that will affect them encourages their acceptance of those changes (Eisner, 1988; Fullan, 1991b) Improves attendance (Newman, 1992) Improves discipline (Furtwengler, 1996; Hill, 1996; Newman, 1995)
Psychological/ Emotional	Teacher-student relationships change as teachers learn to trust students and their ideas (Short & Greer, 1993) Adolescents typically seek and desire adult role models and this offers a forum for that (Straus, 1992) Student co-create reality through participation making them feel more secure about their surroundings (Reason, 1994) Increases students' respect for individual school experiences (Freeman, 1994; Newman, 1992) Empowers students (Delpit, 1988; hooks, 1994)

Table One. Reasons for Involving Students in Restructuring: Four Domains (cont.)

Domain	Evidence
Functional	Students are experts about school (Barclay & Benelli, 1995-96; Campbell, Edgar & Snyder, 1994; O'Laughlin, 1995; Phelan, Davidson & Cao, 1992) Helps educators gain insights (Straus, 1992) Improves school practices (Farrell, 1994; Lincoln, 1995) Helps to create needed dissonance (Nieto, 1994) Students offer fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, creativity, and energy (Villa & Thousand, 1995)
Political	Encourages development of skills needed for citizens in a democracy (Apple & Beane, 1995; Gutmann, Postman, & Illich, 1990; Lincoln, 1995; Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994; O'Laughlin, 1995) Its the right thing to do (Nieto, 1994; Villa & Thousand, 1995)

Psychological and Emotional Reasons. If a goal of restructuring initiatives is to change roles and relationships, then involving students in dialogues about their school restructuring might help to accomplish this goal. Short and Greer (1993) suggest that teacher-student relationships change as teachers learn to trust students and their ideas. At the same time, adolescents typically seek out adult role models and student involvement can offer a forum for that (Straus, 1992). Reason (1994) suggests that students are better able to co-create reality through participation and that process helps them to feel more secure about their surroundings. Fullan (1991) also suggests that educators need to involve students in planning for changes that will affect them. Eisner (1988) reminds us that involvement in planning for changes that affect us helps to encourage acceptance of those changes. If students are expected to change as a result of reform efforts, then they should be given the opportunity to be involved in the reform effort itself. Students, too, need time to prepare for impending changes. They need to make sense of those changes by having time for discussion and reflection about them. Aside from "simply" helping to empower students (Delpit, 1988; hooks, 1994), student involvement also helps to increase students' respect for school experiences (Freeman, 1994; Newman, 1992).

Functional Reasons. Students have valuable ideas to offer and bring a fresh and different perspective to the process of improving schools. Villa and Thousand (1992) argue that students offer a wealth of expertise, creativity, and enthusiasm to collaborative research with adults. SooHoo (1993) and Nieto (1994) found that students are keenly aware of major

issues in their schools and can contribute meaningfully to change efforts. This suggests that students are keenly aware of what "works" for their learning and what doesn't. Their voices may offer many insights as to possible changes in the schooling system.

Research reminds us that students are the experts about their own schooling experiences (Barclay & Benelli, 1995-96; Campbell, Edgar, & Snyder, 1994; O'Laughlin, 1995; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992). Students can help reformers to solve the "right" problem by expressing their unique point of view and helping educators to gain insights (Straus, 1992). Through this involvement, steps can be taken to improve school practices (Farrell, 1994; Lincoln, 1995).

Fullan and Miles (1992) argue that change must focus on the deeper issues of the culture of the system. Yet, when the same people who created the system are the ones that are trying to "fix it," the remedies tend to be focused on a limited view of the problem. "When policy analysts solve the wrong problem, it is usually because they ignore the complexity of that problem. In the area of education, complex problems cannot be broken down into simple elements without running [into] the problem of producing the right solution to the wrong problem" (Dunn, Basom, and Frantz, 1988, p. 24). Use of a consensual model, such as students as partners, suggests a process of dialogue and exchange that promotes social learning, and helps to bring forth emergent multiple goals and shared understandings that are more likely to encourage cultural change. Policies and practices alone are not enough to incite cultural changes. Nieto (1994) suggests that students help to create the dissonance needed to bring issues to light and foster change. Additionally, students offer fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, creativity, and energy (Villa & Thousand, 1995), all of which are needed for reculturing to occur. Without reculturing (Fullan, 1995), no substantial and lasting change takes place.

Political Concerns. A goal of many restructuring initiatives as well as many character education programs is to encourage the development of skills needed for active and meaningful citizenry in a democracy. Many researchers have suggested that the best way for students to learn these skills is to be actively engaged in practicing them (Apple & Beane, 1995; Gutmann, Postman, & Illich, 1990; Lincoln, 1995; Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994; O'Laughlin, 1995). Student involvement along with teachers, administrators, parents, and others in the dialogues and debates about what is legitimate and valuable about their schooling experiences can provide a very rich opportunity to learn the skills of communication, negotiation, and tolerance for others that are so desperately needed in our society.

> Educational change, above all, is a people-related phenomenon for each and every individual. Students, even little ones, are people too. Unless they have some

> meaningful (to them) role in the enterprise, most educational change, indeed most education, will fail. I ask the reader not to think of students as running the school, but to entertain the following question: What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in schools? (Fullan, 1991, p. 170)

Involving students in planning for their own education is the right thing to do (Nieto, 1994; Villa & Thousand, 1995), not in the sense of being politically correct, but rather as a correct thing to do as fellow human beings. Rather than controlling students and silencing their voices, we could be empowering them by providing opportunities to engage in the real problem solving activities of restructuring their schools. Insights brought out by students are reflections of the sociopolitical context in which most educational practices are grounded. If we are part of the problem, it is unlikely that we will be able to problematize the situation, much less to see solutions. We might even find that student involvement can help to facilitate changes by reducing or eliminating resistance on the part of other students. "When students 'speak up,' we find that their perspectives on school and learning, rather than being at odds with those of teachers, are remarkably similar" (Phelan, et. al, 1992, p. 696).

Schools as Democratic Communities

Many students feel cut off from the "four worlds of childhood" - family, friends, school, and work (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 430). Disenfranchised youth feel alienated and alone. Kraft (1996) reminds us that exclusion promotes alienation while participation invites responsibility. Bureaucratic school systems that foster compliance and exclusion rather than responsibility further alienate these youth. The more removed one feels from intrinsic motivations, the less likely one is to take responsibility for their own actions. Schools are intended to be places of learning and developing a sense of community defined by respect and valuing of one another can help to encourage learning. Efforts can be made to "define schools as places where a sense of identity, worth, and possibility is organized through the interaction among teachers, students, and the texts" (Giroux, 1990, p. 361). When schools are framed as democratic communities, the emphasis is on accepting responsibility for one's own actions and on fostering citizenship and caring (Sergiovanni, 1994). This facilitates the goal of schools – learning in a safe and orderly environment.

> Democratic community is aimed not just at improving student behavior but at creating the kinds of ties that bond students together and students and teachers together and that bind them to shared ideas and ideals. When students share the responsibility for developing norms and when their commitment to these norms is expected, they know

> they belong. They get the message that they are needed. They feel a sense of ownership in the classroom. They experience community. These ties are the anecdote to the loss of community that many students are experiencing in their everyday lives (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 120-121).

Methods

The design of this study is reflective of the world view of the researcher as well as the complexity of the content that was studied. As with many studies, this study and the representation of findings likely tell as much about the researcher as they do about the area researched. This study was designed to be respectful of the knowledge and experience that participants had about their involvement in restructuring efforts that include the involvement of students. The intent was to move beyond theory to lived experience (Bruner, 1996), and attempt to tell the stories of some of those who have been involved. It was designed to study the world from the perspective of the interacting individual (Lincoln and Denzin, 1994, p. 575) and to offer enlightenment about what these particular people experienced in this approach to restructuring. This study was grounded in constructivist beliefs that meaning is created, not found, and therefore, it was essential to engage others in dialogue about *how they experienced these restructuring initiatives* if I was to gain understandings about the situation.

A variety of methods were used in this study, including: interviews with teachers and administrators, participatory research with student researchers, observation of key activities and events, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three assistant principals, the interim principal, and the new principal, along with informal discussions with the initial principal. Twelve teachers and the Coordinator of Student Leadership Initiatives were also interviewed. All of the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. In addition, a group of ten "student researchers" received training on how to conduct focus groups with other students in the building and a series of eight focus groups were held. Again, all focus groups were audio-taped and transcribed. During the course of the two years, I also documented key activities and events and analyzed documents pertaining to the vision of the building leader and the restructuring efforts taking place. This was approached as a qualitative case study, with the intent that others might learn from the events that transpired at this school. The primary research question for this study was: How do students, teachers, and administrators *experience* the involvement of students in this school restructuring initiative?

To guide this research, there were also seven other questions which were considered throughout:

1. In what ways were students involved in restructuring activities at their school?
2. What roles did students play at Hill High School in relationship to restructuring?
3. What were the characteristics of the students involved in leadership activities?
4. What evidence was there of increased student leadership at the school?
5. To what extent did student involvement actually affect policy decisions/operations of the school?
6. What evidence was there of the institutionalization of student involvement in restructuring activities at the school?
7. Are there implications for teachers' and administrator's roles when students become involved in school restructuring? If so, what are those implications?

Participants

A variety of participants were included in this research. The purpose for this was two-fold: a) to legitimize the diversity of experiences, and b) to offer greater validity by intentionally seeking contrasting views. The types and numbers of participants are discussed below.

Students

There were two levels of student involvement in this research: a) There was a group of 10 student researchers who worked in collaboration with the researcher and the Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities. See Table Two for a description of their demographic characteristics. The purpose of this work was to learn how to conduct focus groups with their peers, then to apply that knowledge by conducting focus groups and analyzing the data produced by them. The researcher taught these students how to construct, conduct, and analyze focus groups (for more information see Reed & Bechtel, forthcoming). Additionally, the researcher worked very closely with this group and was present at all meetings and focus groups; and b) The second level of student involvement included another group of students who participated in focus groups led by the student researchers. The purpose of these focus groups was to provide a systematic forum for students who might not ordinarily be heard to share their ideas and concerns about their school experiences. An effort was made to select students who were representative of the total school population in terms of gender, race, and academic program level.

Table Two. Demographic Characteristics of Student Researchers

	Males	Females	White	African American	Asian
10th graders	2	4	4	1	1
11th graders	2	2	4	0	0
Totals	**4**	**6**	**8**	**1**	**1**

Faculty

Twelve teachers were interviewed by the researcher one or more times for a total of 16 interviews. An effort was made to select faculty who were representative of the school in terms of gender, race, program levels taught, and length of time teaching. In addition, an open invitation was extended to the faculty to meet informally with the researcher to ask questions about the research or to contribute their thoughts about the school culture and/or the role(s) of students in the school. The Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities was also formally interviewed twice.

Administrators

The three assistant principals, the interim principal, and the new principal were interviewed by the researcher about their perceptions of the culture of the school and the role(s) of students in the school. With the exception of the new principal who was interviewed twice, all of the others were interviewed one time, although there were many opportunities for informal conversations throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed in several ways to ensure triangulation. Analysis methods included comparative analysis, sense-making through the eyes of student researchers, and member checks--opportunities for participants and other stakeholders to react to the findings and share their concerns about them. In addition, triangulation occurred due to the multiple data sources and populations drawn from. Specific analysis methods are discussed below.

Interviews and Field Notes

The researcher maintained systematic field notes of all documented events and activities, interviews, and informal discussions. Interviews, meetings with student researchers, and focus groups were audio taped and transcribed. Using these field notes and transcriptions, the data were coded and analyzed for emerging themes. Student-researchers and the Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities provided guidance and assistance in the coding of focus group transcripts. These themes were then shared with the student researchers and some interview participants for reactions and clarifications. This process was cyclical--develop themes then share with

participants for feedback. During the final stage of the research, findings were shared with the Instructional Cabinet and the Student Government class and an opportunity was provided for reactions to those findings. This information was also considered in the final analysis of the data.

Student Focus Groups

Student researchers and the Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities were invited to share their perceptions/reactions to each focus group. This took place systematically as a debriefing session(s) after each focus group series. The researcher provided written copies of transcripts for the student-researchers for use in analyzing data which was done as a group process during the weekly meetings. Through brainstorming, comparison, and discussion, coding schemas were designed by the group and used to code the data. Emerging themes were identified and further discussed. These meetings were also audio taped and the notes from them transcribed for the researcher and used as additional data.

Document Analysis

Documents were analyzed for content pertaining to student roles and school restructuring efforts. A coding schema was developed and used to determine numerical counts, inconsistencies, and themes present in the documents.

Findings

The primary research question for this study was "How did students, teachers, and administrators experience the involvement of students in restructuring initiatives at their school?" In order to begin answering this question, however, it was important to first identify who became involved, how they were involved, what new roles students played, the extent that student involvement affected policy decisions or the operations of the school, and if/how student involvement was being institutionalized at the school.

There were primarily four student leadership programs that "built capacity." These included the student government, the African-American Action Association, Hands Across the Campus, and the Summer Leadership group. Funding provided by the local foundation paid for a Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities who was responsible for working with the Hands Across the Campus and the Summer Leadership groups. She helped to coordinate student training sessions, handle logistics of student involvement, served as a resource person for the school and for students, created and coordinated a variety of student-run groups, and served as a sounding board for administrators, teachers, and students. While researching this phenomena, I worked very closely with the Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities and was provided with a desk, access to a phone, and a place to store materials in her room.

Who Got Involved?

Although there were many student activities within the school that encouraged student leadership, there were four student groups that tended to serve as sources for student involvement in restructuring initiatives: Hands Across the Campus, the Summer Leadership Training Program, Student Government, and the African American Action Society. These were generally described as the groups that fostered "capacity-building." The role of the Coordinator of Student Leadership Initiatives was to encourage "capacity-building" for student leaders who were to be involved with discussions about and planning for restructuring within the building. She coordinated Hands Across the Campus and co-coordinated (with another faculty member) the Summer Leadership Training Program. Student Government was run as a class, meeting daily for one period. The class was "taught" by two teachers/advisors. Thirty-six students were enrolled in student government. The African American Action Society met as an after school club and had a faculty member as the advisor. Table Three offers more information about each of these groups.

There were formal student leadership training sessions for both Hands Across the Campus and the Summer Leadership Training Programs. Student leadership training was an on-going part of the Student Government class meetings. There was no formal student leadership training for participants in the African American Action Society, although students there learned how to set goals and work towards them. As shown in Table Three, there were approximately 490 students or 38% of the student population involved in these student leadership activities, although it is important to note that many of these students were in more than one student leadership group and that some students left the school since receiving their training.

There were conflicting views about the opportunities for involvement. Some students and teachers felt that anyone could get involved if they showed initiative. Others felt that there were "In Groups" and "Out Groups" and that only those in the "In Groups" really had access to information needed to become involved. There appeared to also be institutionalized barriers to student involvement which included: neighborhood, academic program, and distance from the school. Many students who lived in poorer neighborhoods, which were generally those furthest away from the school, were often unable to stay after school or to attend events during the Summer because of transportation, work, or family responsibilities. It was suggested by some students and teachers that for some students, after school or evening transportation posed safety concerns because of "neighborhood rivalries." Many students and teachers expressed concerns that only students in the higher academic programs were involved in many of the student leadership groups, particularly Student Government. The group that was consistently mentioned as being the most

diverse was Hands Across the Campus which intentionally included students from all neighborhoods and academic programs represented at the school. Some students suggested that many students opted not to get involved because of their disbelief that anything would or could change. This sense of apathy on the part of many students and some teachers was a recurring theme throughout the research.

Ways Students Were Involved In Restructuring

> *Who is allowed to ask and answer questions are part and parcel of how dominance and subordination are reproduced and altered* (Apple, 1996, p. 22)

One of the primary restructuring initiatives at the school was the creation of spaces for student voices to be included in discussions about the school. This was initiated by the original principal at the school when this study began in response to racial incidents at the school that indicated a need to expose areas of the school culture that were fostering tensions. This was accomplished in several ways. Originally, the primary spaces for student voices were in the planning retreat and visions committee meetings, in addition to the principal's advisory council. These took place during the 1995-96 school year. During the 1996-97 school year, there were no longer Visions Committee meetings, but there were more student-run committees such as the Human Relations Commission, as well as advisory roles for students in groups such as the principal's advisory council and through infusion into already existing teacher-run committees such as the Instructional Cabinet and the Safety and Discipline Committee.

There were five primary ways that students were involved in restructuring activities at their school: a) through committees and activities, they worked to improve the school climate, both for themselves and for teachers and administrators; b) through dialogues and written statements, some students sought to improve instruction; c) through actions within the Safety and Discipline Committee and the Instructional Cabinet, students had *some* say regarding the implementation of rules within the building; d) through participation in committees there were *a few opportunities* where students were involved in policy and rule making discussions; and e) when considering alternate scheduling as a restructuring initiative for the building, students were "partners" in the exploration of appropriate models and accompanying professional development. Another consideration when discussing ways that students were involved was the underlying purposes for

Table Three. Perceived Traits of Students in Student Leadership Groups

Leadership Group	# Students Involved	Meeting/Training Times	Student Traits as Described by Others
Student Government	36	daily for 1 class period; received class credit	tended to be white, higher academic track, and representative of only 2-3 neighborhoods; represent all grade levels
Hands Across the Campus	about 30 each training session (215+ so far)	2 day training during school days/meetings during school hours as needed	very diverse; tends to represent all grade levels, races, academic programs, and neighborhoods in the school
Summer Leadership Program	40 each Summer (200+ so far)	1 week training during the Summer/meetings after school as needed	somewhat diverse; tends to have most students from 2-3 neighborhoods; all students trained the Summer after 9th grade
African American Action Society	35-40	no formal training/ meetings after school although some activities during the school day	all members are African American; all grade levels and academic programs represented

student involvement. These tended to vary according to who the building leader was, what the activity was, and how high the stakes were for those involved.

Roles Students Played In Relationship To Restructuring

When asked to describe what roles students played in relationship to restructuring, there were generally three types of responses. One response was to talk either in terms of very traditional student roles with clubs which did not address the issue, or to indicate that they did not understand what I was asking. I have called this type of response "a role with no name." A second type of response was to name specific roles that they have observed. A third type of response was to speak in terms of what they *wished* students would do.

A Role With No Name. While interviewing teachers and administrators and considering comments made by students in focus groups, I was struck by the realization that although many things were happening, they were generally not being named or labeled. People recognized that students were assuming different roles than they had in the past, but they were either unable or

reluctant to label or name those roles. One possibility for this was because they hadn't thought much about those new roles. Another possibility was that by not naming those new roles, they would go away–no naming might have been a form of silencing (Fine, 1993). It was suggested by several teachers when prompted through the interviews that not naming was either due to an acceptance of these new student roles, or more likely, it was due to indifference about the new student roles or to change in general.

Specific Roles Came to Mind. When some students, teachers, and administrators were asked to describe the roles that students played, they were able to name specific roles such as role models, or offering information, or serving in an advisory capacity. Most of the teachers and administrators interviewed were comfortable with the idea of having student input. This was viewed by most as a valuable role for students. Students as "brainstormers" was also viewed by most teachers and administrators as a good way for students to have a say. Their ideas seemed to be welcome as long as teachers and administrators had the final say. When students "demanded" to be heard in roles such as "critics of reform" or "collaborators with teachers and administrators" some teachers and administrators became more uncomfortable. Students took the role of "leader" in terms of working to improve the climate of the school through participation in student-run groups. All of the student leadership groups took actions in this direction, although all did so in different manners. Hands Across the Campus took actions toward improving the racial harmony within the building. One teacher described it this way,

> She was able to have students from different backgrounds get together, participate in different activities both outside the school and inside. And through that I've seen a coming together of students who normally would not have had any association whatsoever. And I think that in itself is an important role of leadership, because they now are able to see what others can do and not just by the same old students doing the same kinds of leadership things that we're used to.
>
> (January 1997 Teacher Interview)

Some students continued to play the role of passive listener in their classes, in restructuring meetings, as well as in student-run meetings. Students may have been provided with knowledge about how to be a leader, but opportunities for practicing these skills within most classroom settings did not exist. This demonstrated that although efforts had been taken to build capacity for leadership among students, little work had been done to prepare teachers for the changing roles and expectations for students. Consequently, there was no critical mass of teachers who were fostering these new roles and responsibilities.

I Wish That They Would... A number of teachers and some administrators responded to questioning about what roles they saw students assuming by speaking about what they wished students *would* do. Generally, these wishes focused around students accepting more responsibility for maintaining order in the school and obeying the school rules. Sometimes the wishes focused on ways that students could be more effective in their classes, too.

> In a way I would like to see every student become more attached to the building, take more pride in the building, so that when they see others vandalizing, throwing garbage, they would take the initiative to say, Hey, come on, its our school. We like our school. To take some pride in their school, to have, I guess, a general feeling that this is a home rather than a prison. That doesn't really get instilled in the students we have here. We really have a fragmented student body. Very fragmented. (January 1997 Teacher Interview).

Another common reaction when students and teachers were asked what roles students should play was that student leaders should be good roles models. There seemed to be agreement about this from nearly every group. One student said, "People that lead other people should be a good example for other students" (eleventh grade student). Several teachers expressed the belief that the leadership training helped students to learn skills so that they could better negotiate the school system and communicate more effectively. They felt that these skills could be important as they served as role models for other students in the school.

Evidence Of Increased Student Leadership

There were four primary examples that indicated increased levels of student leadership at the school: a) an increase in the capacity-building activities; b) changing perceptions about student involvement on the part of some teachers; c) increased student involvement in committees; and d) power struggles that emerged between student leadership groups as they tackled substantive issues. Capacity-building included the student leadership training activities and follow-up meetings of student leadership groups. As students became more involved in committee work with teachers, some teachers began to change their perceptions about the value of student involvement. Evaluations from the planning retreat indicated that most participants expressed that they felt student involvement made an important contribution to the dialogues and planning for restructuring in that setting. Once back at school, though, comments were not always as positive and some teachers were concerned about students being involved in potential policy making situations.

As students continued to be involved in committee work with teachers, some teachers expressed their appreciation for the dedication and creativity that the students showed, identifying

them as important contributors to the on-going conversations. There were a number of committees that students became involved with–some student-run and others previously run as "teacher only" committees. In the student government class there were a variety of committees that tackled specific school related issues and activities. Hands Across the Campus also initiated groups, such as the Human Relations Commission, that tackled school-related issues and activities, particularly those that infringed upon individual's rights.

At times there were tensions between these and other student groups as to which group should be "in charge." Some of this tension may have been due to a lack of communication between the various groups even though there was often an overlap of students in each one. However, another strong reason for the tensions likely was reflective of the limited power that students actually had. There were only certain areas where students had the authority to influence decisions, and when this power was split between groups, some individuals vied for power rather than working for unity.

Extent That Student Involvement Actually Affected Policy Decisions/Operations

There were very limited opportunities for students to actually affect policy decisions or the operations of the school when they were immersed into teacher-dominated committees. In those settings, students primarily played an "information giving" role. When students had opportunities to work in student-run groups, such as the Human Relations Commission or student government committees, or to meet informally with the principal in settings like the principal's advisory council, then they had a forum where they were on a more level playing field.

Although situations where students actually affected policy decisions or operations of the school were rare, there were a few instances where this did occur. The first instance was through the Foundation Management Team. This was a group of two parents, two teachers, two students, the Coordinator for Student Leadership Initiatives, and an administrator, usually the building principal. This group was responsible for determining how money from the grant was to be spent. When I spoke with one of the teachers that served on that committee, he said, "I think the students were more in tune and paying attention to what it was that we were looking for than many of the adults. We actually left a little frustrated because some people still couldn't get it through their heads what the purpose of this was" (February 1997 Teacher Interview). One of the tasks that this committee had was determining which project proposals were worthy of being funded, and how much money each of them should receive. The students were generally more on-target with their critiques and asked questions about how the money would benefit student leadership, which was the purpose of these mini-grants. Perhaps they had more of a vested interest in the initiative.

A second situation where students influenced the implementation of policy was when the Safety and Discipline committee determined that rules that had previously been in place needed to be reinforced. Three students were part of the committee meetings where these rules were discussed and revamped. A concern on the part of students was that whatever rules were decided upon, an important consideration would be the consistency of how they were administered. Although students involved did not feel that they had much real input in determining the rules, especially since they were primarily former rules that were slightly reworked, they did have a key role in helping to implement the rules and to encourage consistency in enforcement. Student government representatives designed posters depicting the new rules and the consequences for breaking them. These posters, after meeting with approval from the Instructional Cabinet, were copied, distributed, and displayed in every classroom in the building.

A third situation arose from the Human Relations Commission. Several students on the commission were concerned about abuse toward some students because of their sexual orientation. They found that there was no explicit language in the Student Bill of Rights or the Student Handbook that discussed this and they moved to have language included in sections about harassment and discrimination. The interim principal agreed to this and there were considerations of asking the district to consider changing the language to include sexual orientation in all of its policies regarding harassment and discrimination.

Like Being Stuck in the Mud. Some of the students and teachers were frustrated by the lack of progress being made regarding identified initiatives for school improvement. One student described his views of what student government had been able to accomplish the following way.

> Well, it seems to like not be working, because everybody who is in student government, they do work hard. They'll meet, they'll debate the issues, but like nothing seems to get accomplished. Nothing will change, so we'll speak, and everyone will hear things, but nothing changes. Its like we're stuck in the mud and you're pressing on the accelerator and the wheels spin, but it doesn't do anything. You're just stuck in the same position. (10th grade student)

This sentiment was echoed by other students and teachers. There was the general feeling that although people were trying, nothing ever seemed to get done. Referring to attempts made by the Visions Committees, one teacher said, "I guess that's my biggest frustration. We got to that one point, and now, now we're just treading water. And I think students were frustrated as well. I know some of them were. The ones that I worked with were ready to go, and here we are, almost a year later" (February 1997 Teacher Interview).

It Is Important To Get Student Input, But... There was an attitude on the part of one principal as well as some teachers that it was important to hear what students had to say, and that it would be taken into consideration when the adults made the decisions. They felt that students could offer useful insights in an advisory capacity, but that students should not actually make decisions. The third principal offered the following example.

> Students have been very helpful in terms of bringing problems to the surface. One example was our final exams. They were scheduled on the Jewish holidays. Student government initiated a move to another day for the exams and presented a plan to the instructional cabinet. The cabinet had a problem with it, but we did consider what the students said.

Institutionalization Of Student Involvement

When considering what evidence there was of the institutionalization of student involvement, three areas surfaced. The first was an infusion of students onto already existing committees. The interim principal had expressed concern that student involvement would disappear once she left unless students were active members of standing teacher committees such as the Instructional Cabinet and the Discipline Committee. Through her efforts, she made sure that student representatives regularly attended those meetings. In addition to those, there were also student representatives on the Parent School Community Council (PSCC), a group that was responsible for creating and occasionally revising the school's plan for meeting the restructuring requirements of the district. Another indicator of institutionalized student involvement arose when the foundation funding was up. Concerned that without someone responsible for coordinating the student leadership initiatives, that these opportunities would disappear, a group of parents, along with the principal, put together enough funding to maintain a part-time position for the coordinator. A third indicator was the continued teacher interest for training more student leaders. Numerous teachers expressed their desire and willingness to continue providing student leadership training and opportunities to apply those skills. Their willingness to continue these efforts implied their support of the program and a sense that at least some opportunities for student leadership would continue even if building level leadership changed or foundation funding was no longer available.

Student, Teacher, And Administrator Views Of Student Participation

As with all other aspects of this study, there were diverse opinions about student participation in restructuring activities. Some administrators, teachers, and students were excited about the possibilities and viewed student input as an important contribution for decision-making. Within that same camp, though, were differing views about the extent that students should be

involved. Some students were just glad to have any opportunities to share their opinions in a setting where they would "count." Generally, students stated that they should be involved in decision-making, especially when it pertained to curriculum or budget areas—decisions that affected them. Some other administrators and teachers stated that students should be able to offer input in those areas, but that the final decision-making should be left up to the adults, those who were being paid to make decisions. There were a variety of reasons why students, administrators, and teachers felt that students should be involved, at least to some degree. Many of these reasons were consistent with the four domains that emerged during the literature review in terms of reasons for involving students in restructuring. These four domains were: a) Learning Environment and Processes; b) Psychological/Emotional; c) Functional; and d) Political.

It was interesting to note that student, teacher, and administrator views on student participation encompassed all of Senge's seven degrees of support that people can have for an organization's vision (1990, p. 219-220). While some teachers and students expressed views of "apathy" or "noncompliance," others expressed views of varying degrees of compliance, from "grudging compliance" to "genuine compliance." There were few examples of teachers who expressed views of "enrollment" or "commitment," the highest forms of support, except for those who were leading the student involvement movement in the school as the student leadership group trainers or advisors.

Students on the other hand more frequently expressed views that fell in the "commitment" or "enrollment" categories. Part of this may be because students generally felt that they had more to gain by becoming involved in restructuring dialogues and activities. It was not surprising that administrators, teachers, and students tended to view student participation differently as there are natural differences that one would expect to occur. These could be viewed as natural points of tension based on one's role and perceptions of authority. Still, although there were some similarities, there was no general consensus–no one voice for each group. Instead, there were great variations in how individual students, teachers, and administrators viewed student involvement.

Learning Environment and Processes. An example of one teacher's comments that reflected her belief that students should be involved stated,

> My concern was or just feeling that if its their education that we are trying to achieve or trying to broaden their horizons or trying to give them the skills that they should be involved in the issues. Granted they wouldn't have the expertise, the experience, the background to back up their knowledge, but we're there to supplement that so it also gives them an avenue to see a forum in action where

> you work by consensus, where you are going to have some dissension and have some people taking some very pronounced views, but you work it all out somehow so you come to a decision that solves everything. (January 1997 Teacher Interview)

Her view suggested that students could learn more about the system and would see teachers as valuable role models by being involved in committee work alongside adults. This is consistent with the "learning environment and processes" domain in that it emphasizes the value of adults as role models for students. Other areas within this domain include consistency with constructivist practices, encouragement of application of higher level skills, helping students to gain a better understanding of how things work, encouraging students' acceptance of impending changes, and improvement in attendance and discipline.

Psychological/Emotional. This domain emphasized the importance of relationships, increased motivation, and increased respect when students participated in restructuring. During focus groups, several students spoke about their new respect for certain teachers and administrators that they had gotten to know through student leadership activities. Even though they might not agree with some things that teachers and administrators said or did, they did have an increased respect for them because of their interactions. One student said,

> I think the administration is willing to work with us, the students, to make the school a better place. I think one problem with this particular administration is that, you know, it has to discipline the school and because of that, he sometimes has to take a stand that maybe doesn't seem popular to, you know, maintain order in the school. I think that maybe that's why some people have a negative feeling towards him. That he's trying to make things more organized. (twelfth grade student).

Through her comment, she demonstrated that although she didn't necessarily like the decisions that had been made by a principal, she was able to understand why he made them and to respect him for that. This is a marked change in attitude for many students who tended to view school as an "us and them" setting. Through relationship building and understanding of why decisions were made, there has been a greater sense of belonging for some students.

Functional. This third domain considered tangible benefits of student involvement such as helping educators to gain new insights, or helping to improve school practices. Items under this domain imply a respect or valuing of what students can contribute to discussions about restructuring. Many administrators and teachers made comments that corresponded with this domain. One example came from a teacher during her January 1997 interview:

> I think that they should be involved to a certain degree. I think if its something that really affects the kids that we should have their input. They may have different kinds of insights that we lack.

Political. There are two primary considerations included in this domain. First, student involvement can encourage skills needed in a democracy. Second, according to Villa and Thousand (1995) and Nieto (1994), its the right thing to do. This does not necessarily infer that it is "politically correct," but rather that in an ethical sense, it is a good thing. Inherent in all of the student leadership groups, though, was a sense that many voices should be heard, and this is a large part of learning how to function in a democracy. The other aspect under the political domain, doing the right thing, was mentioned by a few teachers. One teacher when discussing why he was involved with the planning retreat even though he did not believe that students should be involved in policy making responded with, "It was the right thing to do!" (February, 1997 Teacher Interview).

Some teachers and administrators were fearful of students gaining too much control and being able to "manipulate" situations. In these cases, students were viewed as a threat. One teacher shared her view of student involvement in the Instructional Cabinet meetings:

> Some people were reluctant to do that because they felt that sometimes if the students know too much about the building, and know that there is some dissension in the building, that they may use that to their advantage and play one group of teachers against the other group of teachers. (January, 1997 Teacher Interview).

A few students felt that it wasn't their job and that administrators and teachers should be making the decisions. These students generally viewed traditional roles as more appropriate, which suggests that they had bought into and had been successful in the traditional system. For example, one student who was very vocal about the "inappropriateness" of student involvement was the daughter of a teacher in another school. She was successful academically and socially in the system as it stood. Additionally, part of this traditional focus may have been a result of the apathy that these students had about school in general—revealing their disbelief that anything would change.

A few teachers were indignant that "non-professionals" were being given power that they had been denied. Still other teachers were apathetic about student participation and generally felt that "this too shall pass."

Conclusions

There are four conclusions discussed here: considerations for and about student involvement, natural tensions, factors influencing student readiness to participate, and the role of the building leader.

Considerations For and About Student Involvement

Student involvement in restructuring dialogues and planning is not a panacea, but when combined with other restructuring initiatives, it has the potential to help lay groundwork that might help to expose existing power structures within schools that tend to limit reform efforts. Students do not become active "partners" simply because a principal states that they should be. For a variety of reasons ranging from being successful in the traditional system to distrust of the school and it's bureaucracy, not all students in this study were interested in learning leadership skills or in participating in restructuring initiatives.

For those students who did view this as an opportunity, the boundaries that defined their participation also defined their degree of enthusiasm. Students who had previously been very excited about opportunities to help make "policy decisions" for the school became disenfranchised when expected to serve only in a symbolic manner. For example, students serving on a Discipline Committee that was determining a new school dress code became very disillusioned when they felt that their ideas were ignored by teachers and the administrator, yet their names were included on the flyers that were distributed to explain what the new dress code was and who had been responsible for designing it. They were very distressed when other students confronted them about their involvement. This raised an important consideration about responsibility. Should students be held responsible for decisions made when they served only in a symbolic manner? This would be applicable to many teachers who also serve on site-based committees, yet have no real say into decisions made.

Meaningful contributions. Although there were some negative consequences, student participation contributed meaningfully in many ways, including: offering keen insights, energy and enthusiasm, encouraging a "buy in" to school policies and procedures when they understood reasons for them, and encouraging tolerance of others' views. Through their experiences with communication building and problem solving that were part of the leadership training, some students were perhaps better prepared for the team approach to problem identification and development of potential alternatives than many of the teachers who had not been offered this type of professional development. Student leaders were used to the concept that change takes time, and although they too expressed frustration at how long some changes took and how little seemed to be

accomplished at meetings, they often were the first to remind the group that the planning and discussion stages were just as important as the action stages.

Student ideas were taken seriously by some administrators and teachers and it was not unusual in some settings for student suggestions to help frame the actions that were taken toward improving school problems. For example, in a Visions Committee meeting, as students and teachers were attempting to prioritize areas of focus, one student suggested that perhaps they should first select something that could be readily accomplished so that critical mass would begin to build. Collectively, the group revisited the criteria that they had established and added "able to accomplish" as one of the higher priorities.

Most of the student leaders that I heard from or observed wanted to work together with others to improve the school. Often they had keen insights about how the school structures either supported or hindered student learning. Through their conversations, many of them discovered that they wanted many of the same things for the school as did the teachers such as: improved teacher-student relationships, consistency in how discipline was administered, and increased opportunities for students who needed academic support. When this occurred it helped to create a bond that had not previously been there. There were common visions and common experiences to build from. Those participating in the retreat and Visions Committee meetings, and some teachers who helped to train student leaders, also commented on the improved student-teacher relationships that they had with whom they had worked and their "hopefulness" about the direction of the school. As the students and teachers that I spoke with reflected on their involvement in these activities, most of them were encouraged by the positive outcomes from working together and felt that these kinds of situations offered hope that deep changes might be able to occur, especially if others in the building could also have these same opportunities to explore diverse views.

A powerful aspect of student involvement in restructuring activities was the ability of students to share different vantage points about how the system has or has not worked. By opening the eyes of those students, teachers, and administrators who had not considered ways that the system repressed some students, there was hope that some of the institutionalized walls might begin to come down – that the "regularities" (Sarason, 1990) could begin to be challenged. Students can help to create a needed dissonance that enables these types of changes to take place, but in order to hear what those students have to say, there needs to be opportunities for inclusive collaboration and dialogue where there was a sincere desire to improve conditions and a setting created that allows various groups to feel safe enough to value what others had to say. Heshusius (1995) suggests that

we are better able to hear when there is no preconceived purpose, so if there are opportunities to dialogue without tight agendas, then people are more likely to be receptive to new ideas.

In addition to their willingness to be involved and their perspectives that offered another view, many student leaders also displayed a sense of energy and enthusiasm that helped to keep things moving. Although meetings often occurred after school, being involved in committees was still a novel experience for most students. Rather than dreading another committee meeting as many teachers did, students often brought an energy and enthusiasm with them that helped to ignite others in attendance. Students were willing to take on leadership roles on various committees and activities and generally followed through on whatever initiatives they began.

Fullan (1991) suggested that people are more apt to "buy in" to change when they are part of the process for making the change. This seemed to ring true for the students in this study. Although students may not have agreed with certain decisions that were made, if they understood why they were made they were more apt to go along with them and respect the person that made the decision. During the leadership exchange program, one student remarked to another that as student leaders they shouldn't *break* the rules, but rather they should work to *change* them. Involving students in the process of change helped to develop a sense that they were part of the system, rather than *just a student* that was passing through the school. Involving students helps to increase their motivation and commitment to learning and school (Oldfather, 1995; Garcia, Kilgore, Rodriguez, and Thomas, 1995). When students felt that they belonged, they tended to be more invested in their schooling in general, and according to some students, felt an obligation to be a good role model for others by paying attention in class, getting good grades, and not getting into trouble. Some students, although not actively involved in the process themselves, felt that they were at least being represented and therefore felt more invested, too. There were many students, though, who did not feel that they were represented or did not even know about student involvement, so there was still a lot of work to be done in terms of involving more students and improving communication about what was happening. "If students continue to be disenfranchised from the processes of change, most educational reform, indeed most education, will fail" (Wachholz, 1994, p. 82). Finding ways to lessen this disenfranchisement is important. Involving students in the process of restructuring seems to help some students to become more involved.

As diverse members of the school community become more adept at hearing what each other has to say, it can increase the likelihood of creation of spaces for previously silenced voices. If this happens, it could increase everyone's awareness of policies and practices that reinforce oppressive practices. As students participated in leadership training or programs, they became

more accustomed to hearing what others had to say and to working together with students with whom they would not ordinarily interact. Throughout the interviews and focus group responses were a variety of comments that focused on ways that student leadership *training* had created spaces for students from very diverse backgrounds to begin to talk with one another and to hear what each other had to say. Although students still tended to group together with other students from their same neighborhoods in informal settings, they did begin to recognize and have conversations with people that they otherwise would not have known. By talking and problem-solving with each other, students began to gain more respect for each other and to value what each other had to offer. One group, Hands Across the Campus, had within its stated purpose the explicit intent to improve racial harmony. Activities focused on identifying problems within the school and problem-solving to help eliminate those problems. The Human Relations Commission, an off-shoot of the problem-solving that occurred during a Hands Across the Campus training, was developed to tackle perceived "injustices" within the school. This group was student-run and student-centered. It was given the authority to problem-solve and when the building leader regularly attended meetings, it became an action-oriented group. It was a positive outcome from the student leadership training.

Many teachers and students expressed that if students were provided more opportunities to talk with one another, to communicate about how they experienced school, regardless of what academic program they were in, or what neighborhood they came from, that racial harmony within the building would improve. Some teachers expressed that they had already seen a difference. So student leadership training offered an avenue to encourage students to talk and problem-solve, while increasing their awareness of others' points of view and begin to move beyond the institutional barriers that manifested cultural dominance.

Some teachers, too, became more willing to consider the views of students and others as time went on and they gained practice in hearing what others had to say. There was almost a desensitizing process that occurred as they became accustomed to involving more people in the decision-making process. Several teachers and some administrators commented that they felt by hearing what students had to say, new ways of viewing the school structures would become apparent and that this might help to forge better ways of providing a solid education for all students. "Sustaining reform means hearing many voices in the school community, prizing their diversity, confirming their legitimacy, and allowing their influence to be expressed in plans and dreams..." (Partnership and Voice, July 1996).

An unintended benefit of this research process was the willingness of teachers and administrators to consider the student data collected and analyzed by student researchers. Nearly all students, teachers, and administrators expressed that it made sense to have students researching how other students felt about various school-related issues and reporting back to both adult and student leaders on their findings. Students who had been involved in the focus groups conducted by student researchers generally expressed that they were glad to have a forum where their ideas would be heard and considered. Many students expressed that they were hopeful that there would be more opportunities for this type of thing. When the student researchers presented their findings at the Instructional Cabinet Meeting and to Student Government, they were very well-received and taken quite seriously. The third principal expressed his desire to continue with a student-researcher program, and stated that he felt that it was a valuable way to elicit many students' views in a constructive manner.

Involvement does not guarantee improvement. It is important to acknowledge that simply involving all partners in decision-making is no guarantee that educational processes will improve, but having many diverse voices contributing to the dialogues helps to improve the odds. It is through creative dissonance that the impetus for change emerges. If we do not know that structures are repressing certain groups, then we are unlikely to work to change them. Even when we are aware, there is a tendency not to address those issues. Lortie (1975) suggested that teachers were more apt to take actions if they felt that it was for the benefit of students. Student involvement in school restructuring dialogues offers teachers some opinions about what students need. Perhaps that increases the likelihood of action to remedy those problem areas.

Natural Tensions

Throughout this study there were natural tensions that occurred based on the differences inherent in students', teachers', and administrators' roles, both in terms of individual's views regarding their responsibilities as well as others' expectations for them. One's own views about what a "good" teacher, student, or administrator should be as well as one's perceptions about what others' felt they *should* be were constant dynamics that flavored how individuals interacted. Parkay, Shindler, and Oaks (1996) have found that there are often "role conflicts" between what one would like to do versus what one is expected to do, particularly for administrators. Although there was no one student, teacher, or administrator voice, there were elements that suggested common areas of struggle for each of these groups. For example, for administrators, there was an expectation on the part of many people that they were there to make and enforce rules. This is

consistent with Larson's (1992) findings which suggest that administrators were the ones who were *supposed* to be in charge.

For teachers there was an expectation that they were there to teach students and to control behaviors in the classroom. No one would argue that a primary purpose of school is to educate students, but there are varying definitions about what that education should be. Some teachers viewed involvement of students as an extension of the learning process. Others felt that the place to learn was in the classrooms and that outside activities detracted from the learning at hand.

Students who were involved in restructuring dialogues often walked a fine line between being "good" students, meaning they did what their teachers told them to do, and being "partners" whose ideas and concerns were "welcome." Many of the students involved were astute enough to understand that there were certain situations [and people] where their ideas were welcomed, but that there were other situations where they needed to play a more traditional student role. When students did not either fully understand these nuances or chose to ignore them, there were consequences. Other students also had differing expectations of the student leaders. Some felt that student leaders were not representative of the school and that they should either take more efforts to learn what others wanted or that there should be more diverse representation. It was interesting to note, however, that members of all three groups identified the role of "role model" for student leaders, although the definitions of role model tended to differ with individuals.

One teacher shared with me his concerns about public perceptions of teachers and the damage that student involvement could potentially have. He expressed that although most teachers work hard, there was a prevailing belief that was reinforced by the media that teachers were not competent enough to make decisions. This teacher felt strongly that teachers and administrators have gone to school for many years to earn the right to make informed decisions. Although he felt that students could and should offer insights in an advisory capacity, the professionals who were being paid to do so should be the ones making decisions. He expressed frustration that teachers are professionals, yet they are not respected or trusted enough by the public to make decisions, yet, to add insult to injury, students were now being brought in as part of the process.

Hooks (1994) expressed the belief that before teachers can empower students, they must be empowered themselves. It has only been in relatively recent history that teachers have been invited to the discussion and decision-making tables. In this school, there were some teachers who felt that only certain teachers were even welcome to do that and that many teachers were not represented by those in power. So in essence, many teachers were not feeling very empowered, and in fact, were feeling disempowered. This is consistent with the notion of schools as coercive

bureaucracies, where those in charge have ultimate and complete power over those consigned to their care. In such an organizational context, attempting to enact democratic governance creates multiple ongoing tensions, because power can be withdrawn by those in charge at any time.

Several teachers expressed that with each new building or district leader, there were concerns raised about the vision and expectations of those leaders. Although one leader might value input and collaborative decision-making, another might not. Some teachers expressed that although most administrators stated that they valued collaboration and participation, one administrator's definition of those could be very different from another administrator's definition. This helped to foster a sense of unease on the part of many faculty members in the building. Involving students in discussions and planning helped to create further tensions about who should be involved and under what circumstances.

It is also important to note that there were many long-standing policies and practices in place that began to be called into question when "partners" were identifying areas that "worked" and those that "needed to be addressed." When long-standing policies and practices are called into question, this can be very threatening for those who either helped to negotiate them or who had grown comfortable with them. Apple (1996) reminds us that "...educational policies and practices were and are the result of struggles and compromises over what would count as legitimate knowledge, pedagogy, goals, and criteria for determining effectiveness" (p. xvi). When these fundamental issues are threatened, one's own sense of what it means to be a professional can also be threatened. It is also important to note that long-standing policies and practices were called into question as "partners" identified areas that "worked" and those that "needed to be addressed" and that this added to the tensions already in place.

The Role of the Building Leader

The fundamental beliefs of the building leader played a key role in defining what participation meant in this school. During the two years of this study, there were three different building level leaders, each with their own approaches toward student involvement and other restructuring efforts. The initial principal, who had the original vision for student involvement, operated from a pro-active stance. The interim principal was concerned with defending the progress that had been made and sought ways to institutionalize student involvement. The principal hired mid-year during the second year of the study, appeared to be interested in managing student participation. Each of these stances had very different implications for how restructuring occurred.

The initial principal, when she began these efforts, was near retirement. She had a long history of programmatic and administrative success within the district, and had previously

demonstrated a willingness to "buck" the system. Attempting any radical initiative such as this requires a leader who has a vision and is willing to take chances. When she left, the bureaucratic forces resumed. It is apparent that no efforts were made on the part of the central administration to find another principal with a similar vision. There had been a history of frequently moving principals from building to building within this district, often during the last several weeks of the summer break. This implies that the district considered its principals to be inter-changeable pieces within the district. This type of message likely speaks loudly to administrators within the district and discourages innovation and risk taking.

When the study first began, there was one direction for the involvement of student leadership in terms of restructuring. Students were to be partners with teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members in terms of identifying directions for the school to take, and developing plans to help get the school to new places, a *pro-active* stance. There were a variety of open-ended forums for discussions to take place.

This changed when the first principal retired. With an interim principal, running the school for half a year, there was still a focus on student involvement, but the emphasis had changed. Instead of the focus being on identifying areas for rejuvenation and making improvements, it moved more towards *defending the progress* that had been made. The direction of student involvement became one of attempting to institutionalize opportunities for student involvement. For example, the mini-grants awarded through the Foundation Management Team were aimed at encouraging a variety of capacity-building activities for student leadership. The push was to "force" teachers to consider ways to involve students in leadership activities, if they were to have their proposals funded. Another strategy for institutionalizing student involvement was to create positions for student representation on what had been formerly teacher-dominated governance committees. Based on conversations that we had, the interim principal's intent was to create spaces for student voices that would remain in place, no matter who the next principal was. She also continued to promote opportunities for open-ended discussions with students through forums such as the Principal's Advisory Council and the Human Relations Commission. When describing her interactions with the Principal's Advisory Council, she said,

> I think its a wonderful forum for students to air their issues, to have their concerns validated. Even if action couldn't be taken to correct what students saw as injustices or problems within the school, they at least had an opportunity to air their ideas and have their views heard, and then a reason could be given for why something couldn't be done or what could be done, or at least to what extent something could be done.

> So I think that the principal's advisory group is a good, no, excellent forum for encouraging questioning in a responsible way. A protesting, if I can use that word, in a responsible way. A responding and interacting with adults ,in that case, with the building principal, the alleged ultimate authority in the building. But I think it was a wonderful opportunity for the adults and students to have an opportunity to interact (January 1997 Interview with Interim Principal).

When the new principal took over at the end of January 1997, there was again a change in strategies. His stance became one of *managing* student participation. He seemed to prefer interactions with students where he remained in control. His approach was to continue to encourage student involvement through representation on formerly teacher-dominated committees and informally sought out student opinions as he walked through the cafeteria and hallways. He commented on his interactions with the Principal's Advisory Council in the following way.

> The Principal's Advisory Council, I have a problem with that. Its like they come together and bring all of their gripes. They either don't trust what I've said or they don't listen because they keep asking about the same things. There needs to be more of an agenda for those meetings. Like maybe they could help to design ways to make things more equitable, for example. Have an advisory council on having more assemblies here at school. Or maybe they could work on discipline initiatives. Instead they seem to want to attack me. Their role isn't to be confrontational, is it? I've met with them two times and both times I felt like I was being attacked. I'm very uncomfortable with those meetings. (April 1997 interview with new principal)

Evans (1996) reminds us that how one views the change process greatly affects how one approaches that process. Some people view change as a stable process – as something predictable and logical. According to Evans, people with this "traditional" view of change tend to focus innovation on structure and tasks and to approach the changing of roles and rules in a "top-down" fashion. Others, according to Evans, view change in a "strategic-systematic" fashion that emphasizes the system as something fluid, unpredictable, and at times, turbulent. The focus in this paradigm of change tends to be on the process of change, rather than on the outcomes. According to Evans (1996), in "strategic-systematic" change, the focus is on people, culture, meaning making, and commitment building (p. 7). As the principals changed, so too did the definitions of student participation and collaboration. The leadership in the building had shifted from a "progressive" or "strategic-systematic" view that encouraged initiative and thinking to a "traditional" view that was concerned with managing behaviors (Evans, 1996; McCaslin & Good, 1992).

Factors Influencing Student Involvement

There were a number of factors that influenced student involvement including: the readiness of students, apathy, the need for coordination of efforts, teacher readiness for student involvement, and understandings about the limits to student involvement. Student readiness encompassed both the leadership training available as well as student comfort levels when interacting with adult authority figures. Teacher readiness included willingness to hear and honor student voices, belief that students had something worthwhile to say, and knowing how to elicit student voices.

Readiness of students. Throughout this study, it was apparent that not all students were equally ready for involvement in discussions about and planning for restructuring in their school. As part of the initial Foundation grant, students were to receive training to prepare them for their involvement. This "capacity-building" was an essential step in the process of getting students ready to be involved. Students who had gone through Hands Across the Campus training, were part of the Summer Leadership Training Program, or who participated in Student Government were generally viewed by teachers and administrators as better prepared for involvement in these discussions and planning sessions. One administrator expressed that he felt these students were less "in your face" than those who had not had the leadership training. Part of the training sessions emphasized the need to listen carefully, to think before reacting, and to approach situations in a problem-solving fashion rather than simply criticizing others.

The population of students attending this school was very diverse and included students from all walks of life. Some students came to school better prepared to interact with adults in a non-threatening fashion. Others were uncomfortable dealing with any adult authority figures. All of the students who participated seemed to benefit from participation in student leadership training, but it seemed to be especially important for students from lower academic classes as well as for students from lower socio-economic neighborhoods.

Apathy. As I spoke with the participants in this study, I was moved by the dedication of those who were involved with student leadership initiatives. The teachers who were involved truly seemed to care about the students and ensuring that they had opportunities to be involved constructively. A high value was placed on the leadership skills that were developed through the training sessions and some of the teachers involved stated that they also attempted to use these skills in their own lives. Most of the students involved were also very dedicated and offered a fresh enthusiasm and energy to the tasks they undertook. But apathy lurked like a cancerous growth in the background, waiting for conditions to be right for its return. Many other teachers and students in the building were apathetic about student involvement in school restructuring initiatives. Some

students were cynical about there being any true opportunities for students to have a say in what occurred. Other students expressed concerns about a lack of adequate representation of students in the few opportunities where students did have some say and felt that the student representatives did not represent most of the school. Some teachers were waiting for this newest fad to pass. Although some teachers and students were optimistic, without opportunities to see "real change" and situations orchestrated to help overcome feelings of powerlessness, many were likely to revert back to being apathetic. Also, for students who were told that their voice was valued yet were denied opportunities for dialogue, it became a breeding ground for distrust and cynicism, encouraging even more apathy.

While no change will ever satisfy everyone, the need to see "real change" was voiced as important by both teachers and students and unfortunately, there were few opportunities where this occurred. Part of this was due to the starts and stops associated with the changes in building level leadership. Some of this was reflective of the types of students who served as the representatives on teacher-dominated committees. Many of these were students who had bought into the system and generally were supportive of what occurred. As members of "the system" they were not likely to bring to light concerns of those who were not part of the system (Henry, 1996), so without those new insights, real change was unlikely to occur.

Some of the cynicism on the part of students and teachers was due to the nature of change in general. Change takes time, and two years is not enough time to make many "real" changes. As a researcher, that any changes at all occurred is encouraging. However, it was more difficult for many of those "in the trenches" to feel that same sense of optimism. There was a long way still to go.

Further, there needed to be more situations to help students and teachers overcome feelings of powerlessness. As one person in a complex high school situated within an even more complex district, there were many times when students and teachers, and probably the building level administrators, felt that they were powerless. For example, when the budget hearings took place, although many came out and spoke, there was an underlying feeling that it wouldn't really make much difference. With the superintendent in the process of retiring and a new superintendent coming in, many were leery of the changes in direction that would take place. Although there were disagreements with the current superintendent's direction, there was at least a comfort level in knowing what one should expect. Changes can foster fear (Evans, 1996). When people don't feel that they have a stake in what occurs, they are more likely to remain uninformed and apathetic about it.

Coordination of student leadership activities. The Coordinator of Student Leadership Initiatives played a key role in fostering the involvement of students in many aspects of student leadership. She was responsible for coordinating and/or providing student leadership training for the Hands Across the Campus program and jointly for the Summer Leadership Training Program. She was in charge of monitoring the foundation grant expenditures to make sure that they remained within the intent of the grant even though the initial direction had changed. Aside from handling all of the logistical details regarding student training and release from classes or transportation arrangements so that students could be involved, the Coordinator also served as a sounding board about student leadership for administrators, teachers, and students, as well as an advocate for students. It was the opinion of many teachers and administrators that substantially less involvement of students would have occurred without someone who was dynamic in this position. The Coordinator was a constant reminder to teachers and administrators that student leadership and involvement was a priority in the building. The symbolism of having a position dedicated to student involvement spoke volumes. When the new principal came on board, the Coordinator of Student Leadership Initiatives introduced herself, explained what her job entailed, and helped bring him up to speed on how students had been involved in the building. Without someone in this position, there may not have been as smooth a transition as there was. Although each building leader approached student leadership somewhat differently, having a Coordinator of Student Leadership Activities helped to keep this initiative in the forefront of everyone's mind. In the words of one administrator, she was "essential" to keeping students involved.

Teacher readiness. Just as there were varying degrees of student preparation for student involvement, so too were there varying degrees of readiness on the part of teachers. Lincoln (1995) suggests that before creating spaces for student voices in the classroom, one should consider the following: Are teachers willing to hear and honor student voices?, Are teachers concerned that listening to student voices is worthwhile?, and Do teachers know how to elicit student voices? (p. 89-90). These questions appear to be appropriate for this setting as well. Efforts were made to build the capacity of student leaders so that they were prepared to be involved in discussions about and planning for restructuring in their school, but aside from the training offered to all participants at the initial retreat, there was no other formal training for teachers about how to interact with students in these settings. Some teachers, by nature of their involvement of students in their classrooms or their willingness to hear what students had to say, were open to this new experience. Others were not as open initially, but became more comfortable with the idea after working closely with students on various projects. Still other teachers were not

comfortable with the idea and did not become more comfortable as time went on. If a key aspect to maintaining any restructuring initiative is developing a critical mass, then the initial preparation of both those to be involved and others who might later be involved is also important. Just as student leaders benefited from their training according to teachers and administrators, so too, might teachers have benefited from the opportunity to practice non-traditional involvement with students in a less threatening environment. This training might have also offered a forum for teachers to dialogue about their comfort levels with student involvement and what they viewed as appropriate limitations to student involvement.

Limitations to student involvement. There is often a "constant juggling act between structure and freedom" (MacNeil and Krensky, 1996). "Freedom without structure can lead to chaos and in that chaos, the learning process comes to a halt. Thus attempting to relinquish some authority or control does not mean that we, as adult leaders, can completely abdicate our responsibility to provide structure or boundaries" (MacNeil and Krensky, 1996, p. 186). When students, teachers, and administrators were brought together at the initial planning retreat and subsequent Visions Committee Meetings, a great deal of attention was paid to the "ground rules" for everyone's involvement. The same was true in student-centered programs such as Student Government, the Human Relations Commission, and the Principal's Advisory Council.

When students were placed into previously teacher-dominated committees, there was little or no open conversation when all parties were present about how these committees were now to operate. Everyone was left to their own definitions of what limitations would be placed on student involvement. Throughout this research it has been evident that students can and did play important roles, but it has also been apparent that there needs to be open conversations about what student roles are appropriate and under what circumstances. For example, the third principal was uncomfortable with student questioning of policies and practices in the Principal's Advisory Council, yet this had been an acceptable practice under the previous two building administrators.

In general, students were grateful to have the opportunity to be involved and were fairly flexible in terms of acting as decision-makers or respecting that they were only to serve in an advisory capacity, as long as they understood what was expected of them. A key element was making sure that these expectations were clearly communicated to all involved. Just as teachers have often been frustrated after serving on committees only to find that decisions had already been made, so too, were students. There are many definitions of participation and collaboration, so it was important that the working definition be reviewed in each new situation.

Discussion

In this section the four theoretical frameworks for the paper are revisited: issues for restructuring, concerns for curriculum and philosophy, issues and concerns when involving students, and the possibilities of schools as democratic communities. Each of these themes flowed throughout the study.

Issues for Restructuring

This study was about power–who had it and who did not. Schools, as they generally exist, are bureaucratic organizations that limit participation and constrain the legitimization of multiple perspectives. This school was no exception. Although efforts were instigated by the initial principal to begin to break down the barriers that limit collaboration and community, when she left, her efforts dissipated. The school had not been recultured, but merely assumed a different mantle for a brief moment. Her vision for the school had not transcended the long standing traditions and regularities in place. So, what does this suggest about restructuring?

The restructuring initiative begun at this school by the initial principal in this study set out to modify existing structures within the school (considering block scheduling), reinvent the roles and responsibilities of the actors within the school (particularly in terms of student-teacher relationships), and begin work toward improving the lines of communication within the school. Due to a lack of support from the teachers, block scheduling was not instituted. It is important to note that block scheduling was an initiative generated by the initial principal--it did not emerge through planning discussions or research conducted by students and/or teachers within the school. Even while working to increase the legitimatization of students' knowledge and experience, many of the same top-down strategies were still being used with teachers by administration in the school. Some teachers expressed concern that they had no power, but the students would be running the school. Perhaps in some ways, their fears were justified.

Some teachers and students expressed to me their belief that the students who would have the most to say about how the school fostered inequities would never become involved in a group that was sanctioned by the school. For one reason, they wouldn't trust that the school would really value what they had to say. For another reason, they were resistant to anything that the school had to offer. These students basically came to school, went to class [usually], then left the building. They tended to view school as an opportunity to hang out with their friends, rather than as a place to be educated. A few teachers expressed that they hoped that other students could represent these

disenfranchised students, at least to some degree, but that definitely students had a better chance of understanding that point of view than did the teachers.

Donaldson (1993) discussed what he termed as the "Killer D's" areas that undermine collaborative efforts: defensiveness, discord, defeatism, disintegrate, and disenchantment. If one is uncertain about their own future standing, then it is more difficult to be willing to risk hearing the views of others who disagree with your own deeply ingrained values and traditions. There were many causes for uncertainty on the part of teachers, administrators, and students throughout this research, both at the building level and at the district level. Some teachers were not sure that they would still have a job. One assistant principal did not know if he would be returned to the classroom or if he would remain an assistant principal. It was not until the evening before he was to return to a classroom that he got word that he would indeed be remaining as assistant principal. With this kind of uncertainty, it was very difficult to further challenge one's beliefs by considering alternate views.

Many teachers have worked for many years to hone their teaching strategies and could feel threatened when others question the appropriateness of those strategies. It can shake the underlying confidence of anyone to have their competence questioned. The original principal had established an expectation for valuing diverse opinions. There was a consistency in her vision and methods for achieving that vision. Although some teachers did not agree with the direction that she was taking the building, most would agree that they at last knew where things were headed. When the interim principal, was in office, there was a cloud of uncertainty that hung throughout the building. This was because of the budget crisis, daily rumors about when she would be leaving, and who was in the running for the principalship. Right up until a week or two before she left, no one knew for sure what direction the board of education would take in terms of replacing her. There was a climate of anxiety about the future of the building coupled with a sense of defeatism, an apathy about one's ability to do anything to change it. There was still a sense of uncertainty when the third principal, came on board because no one knew what to expect.

When one considers the "Killer D's" there were opportunities for nearly all of them to be in place at various times while this research occurred. Uncertainty encouraged defensiveness. When plans were developed but nothing further happened, a sense of defeatism or disenchantment was fostered. The original structures for student involvement as partners changed. When there was building-level leadership that established expectations that valued diverse student voices in conjunction with a relatively stable climate, teachers and administrators seemed to be more willing to hear diverse

student voices. Although even when there was a stable climate and consistent leadership, student involvement was still a threatening prospect for some teachers.

Concerns for Curriculum and Philosophy

Weston's (1997) statement that "the adult bureaucratic values of control, efficiency, and accountability set the climate and tone for teaching and learning in schools" (p. 165) emphasizes the need for multiple voices, including those of "non-adults" to be considered when revising school practices. Without fresh insights, there is a danger of constantly revisiting the same ill-defined problems with the same non-productive strategies. In this study, students had a lot to say about what they valued and learned from in school. Although the academic program of each student tended to influence how each student viewed their opportunities to learn, all students had something to say, and generally their comments were insightful. The following is an excerpt from an article that a student from a lower academic track wrote and had published in a district sponsored newsletter.

> Class period after class period, we were given nothing but busywork dittoes and reading out of generalized textbooks that did not seem fit for a ninth grade level. We never had debates, or classroom discussions on important things such as current events or government. Most of the students were apathetic about learning and treated the teachers like enemies. In return, those teachers were just as apathetic about teaching the kids as the kids were about being taught. How can children who are tracked in this way achieve in an environment in which they are said to be on a "lower" level than their peers? Let's be honest: kids in mainstream classes are capable of the same activities that CAS [the Centers for Advanced Study--a gifted high school program] students take part in. Kids in CAS have been encouraged and introduced to education with a positive idea in their minds that they can succeed and perform up to the highest expectations, while kids in mainstream like me are not usually expected to work and care very much....And of course, there is the segregation of race and socio-economic background in tracking. Is it a coincidence that certain higher-level courses are predominantly Caucasian with students who come from white-collar backgrounds and lower-level courses are predominantly African-American? Some people say racism is fading, but a learning environment segregated like this is a breeding ground for stereotypes. What is this really teaching our kids?

In a conversation that I had with this student following the publication of her article, she told me about the response that she received at school. Several teachers confronted her and accused her of having someone else help her write the article. She felt deeply hurt by this, and expressed that that type of teacher attitude only illustrated her point—there were lower expectations for students in the lower academic tracks. There is a real irony that tracking still occurred at this school where students were invited to be "partners" with teachers and administrators. Tracking was a largely unchallenged structure within the building. Until the inequality and power issues surrounding tracking are challenged, it is unlikely that other traditional structures, like student-teacher relationship, will be changed either. There was still very much an essentialist (Oliva, 1997) philosophy that permeated the school, emphasizing cognitive goals and behaviorist principles, rather than a philosophy that valued student-centeredness or breaking down the barriers of injustice within the school that limited school reform for all participants. Consequently, the first principal's vision for the school was out of sync with the primary philosophy of education that undergirded the beliefs and actions of most teachers within the school. More work would need to be done to create dissonance about those beliefs and actions before real change can occur. This could feasibly occur through the involvement of diverse student voices and/or through action research that teachers conduct themselves.

Issues and Concerns When Involving Students

Which students tended to become involved was a key issue in this study. While the initial principal and the interim were in office, there was a concerted effort to involve students in several of the leadership programs who might not ordinarily become involved in school affairs. The was an intentional blending of students representing wealthy and poor; black, white, and brown; college bound and potential drop-out; discipline problem and squeaky clean. These students expressed through words and actions an increased commitment to the school. They began acting as though their opinions mattered. Their self-efficacy increased, especially for the at-risk youth who had not been valued before. Students began talking to other students whom they would not have associated with before having these opportunities to interact. There was a greater sense of respect on the part of the students for the school, the teachers, the administration, and themselves.

When the third principal took office, there was a tendency to only involve the students in the student government class. These students tended to be white, from the wealthier neighborhoods, and in the higher academic programs. They frequently expressed a sense of

privilege and were not generally very tolerant of other students' ideas. For example, when a group of students wanted to develop a Student Bill of Rights, several members of the student government informed those students that if any group should be working on that issue, it should be the student government. They did, however, offer to consider the ideas of the other students. Students coming from privileged backgrounds tended to assume that they had the right to be leaders as evidenced by one student leader's quote.

> I still don't understand why people are saying that about student government—that it doesn't represent the students because its not diverse. I mean, have we ever had a black president of the United States? I mean, politicians or people who are in politics get involved because they know the system. They know what it takes to do the job. And they go in there and make the laws and that applies to everybody. (eleventh grade student)

Those who came from impoverished or minority homes or who were in lower track classes tended to revert back to more passive student roles when the "traditional" student leaders took over. Although these groups of students expressed their anger at the student government group, little was done to re-establish their power base. Power breeds power–whether it is the principal creating a structure for giving power to students, or privileged students assuming their self-determined power. Yet, none of the students or even the teachers had much power without the supportive conditions created by the building principal. Each group had the power to resist (McLaren, 1993), but the power to be involved was by invitation only. Can this really be power when someone else has the ability to remove it?

Other issues pertaining to student involvement include where and when student leadership training was offered. Many students in this school, particularly those from the lower socio-economic and minority neighborhoods had family responsibilities after school, such as babysitting or working, and were unable to attend afterschool meetings. Transportation was another key issue for these students. Although there was an activity bus to transport students, many students were fearful of being in certain neighborhoods, particularly after dark, because of gang related issues. Transportation also precluded many youngsters from being involved. The Hands Across the Campus group addressed these issues by having leadership training sessions and activities during the school day. This allowed for a greater diversity within the group—one of the group's goals—and clearly demonstrated to students the value that was placed on their participation.

Information is power, and according to Gilligan (1993), being heard is a political act. In this study, those who had information about what was happening in school were better able to prepare for events or negotiate impending plans. Also, those who knew what was going on were in a better position to become involved in other activities or programs where they would continue to be informed. When students and teachers had the same access to information, such as in the Instructional Cabinet meetings, it had the potential to became a step toward leveling the playing field. Where this leveling off broke down was in the unequal ability to use the information to create change and the power hierarchies in place at these meetings. Students were able to increase their *awareness* of *what* was occurring and develop a greater understanding about *why* it was occurring, but there still were few opportunities for students to use this information in other ways. Teachers, through their years of involvement, their indoctrination into how the system worked, and through the wisdom gained as they matured through practice, were more capable of using the system to their advantage.

Who became involved in student leadership was also influenced by the flow of information about opportunities available in the school. Many students never heard about the opportunities for student leadership training. In some groups such as the Student Government, many of the students who chose to run for office had friends who were already in Student Government, friends who encouraged them to become involved and reminded them of the impending deadlines. This perpetuated the involvement of a certain type of student, generally those in higher academic programs and from certain neighborhoods.

Another area for consideration regarding communication and the power of information was the role the student researchers did and could play in the school's efforts with reform. The student researchers were able to elicit information from other students in a non-threatening manner. They generally had a keen sense about what types of follow-up questions to ask and how to frame them so that they were able to get the most information from students. It is possible that students were more comfortable sharing information with other students, although nearly all of the students in the focus groups expressed that they enjoyed having the opportunity to share their views, especially since it was to be shared with teachers and administrators in a summary fashion. Student-researchers could play a powerful role in terms of gathering and presenting data to groups that were interested in moving toward changing barriers within the school. They were a bright, capable group that worked hard, and felt empowered through the process.

Possibilities of Schools as Democratic Communities

Who should have the right to help recreate the school? This study was about the tensions that occurred as this question was played out. Whose voices have legitimacy? Who best knows the schooling experience? How many perspectives should be considered? Whose perspectives should be considered? While the initial principal and the interim were in office, there were glimmers of hope that a school community was beginning to emerge. The interactions between students, teachers, administrators, and community members at the retreat went beyond merely polite conversations. Real issues were beginning to be discussed in a non-coercive manner. Part of this was likely due to the location of the retreat–away from the school setting. Activities within the school building tended to follow more traditional student-teacher patterns, although small group interactions tended to be warmer and more open. Student participation at teacher-dominated committees offered the least successful interactions in terms of valuing diverse voices. Just as the student government reclaimed what they viewed as their "legitimate" right to leadership, teacher groups such as the Instructional Cabinet tolerated student input, but promptly asserted their authority in terms of who was allowed to participate in decision-making. If schools are to become more democratic, then there needs to be better preparation of all involved in terms of setting boundaries, preparing students *and* teachers for their new roles, and communicating openly so that all have access to information needed for effective decision-making. Communication needs to be improved within the school community so that all students and teachers have the opportunity to become involved if they choose—if that is truly a goal of the school restructuring teams. Professional development for teachers and students regarding the new roles that students can play is also mandatory for this type of initiative to be successful.

Educational Importance

Public opinion tends to concur that many schools are not educating students for the real world. If schools are to change what they are doing, then the barriers to reform must be exposed. Students, when provided with the opportunity to dialogue with teachers and administrators about how they experience school, can offer valuable insights about what helps or hinders their educational experiences. Gilligan (1993) suggests that being heard is a political act. Involving students is also a political act, so it is important to consider *who* benefits and *how* they benefit. If students are being heard, then that suggests new ways of seeing student-teacher relationships, moving away from a mindset of "processing" (McLaren, 1986) students through school and instead involving them more in the educational process. The involvement of students has many

implications for students, teachers, and administrators and raises questions about next steps to take as students offer insights about how school practices repress and devalue certain groups within the school.

As discussed throughout this paper, representation was a crucial element in making sure that the dissonance which can encourage new ways of seeing could occur. Without voices that challenged the status quo, and new roles and relationships that could develop as different factions began to work together toward a common vision, changes weren't as likely to occur. If the only voices that were allowed to have legitimate spaces simply reinforced what was already in place, then there was no purpose for those meetings to occur other than as a symbolic gesture. When considering power and access implications of student involvement, it is also important to be aware of *who* benefits and *how* they benefit. Again, the answers to these questions varied based on the context and expectations. For example, students benefited when offered opportunities to share views and learn how the inner workings occurred, but they did not benefit in situations where they were only symbolically offered involvement yet were held fully responsible for decisions made. When one group benefits at the expense of another, this tends to foster more distrust and anxiety. There were plenty of natural tensions that already existed, so if student involvement is to be beneficial, care should be taken to be respectful of the needs of all groups involved. As Apple (1996) said, "Rather than spending so much time treating each other so warily –sometimes as enemies–we should view the creative tension that exists as a good thing. We have a good deal to learn from each other..." (p. xiii).

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

In retrospect, there were several limitations to this research. The small numbers of students who participated in the student-led focus groups and the tendency of those who did participate to be more motivated than their peers, as evidenced by returning their signed letters of consent was an area of concern. Their follow-through and subsequent participation suggests that perhaps they were better able to work within the system than other students, raising concerns about their ability to be representative of other students in the school. Another limitation to the study involved the teachers who were selected to participate. Many of the teachers involved were either instructional team leaders and/or were involved with the student leadership programs. Because so many of the teachers that were selected were instructional team leaders, they may have had different power positions than other teachers and consequently may have viewed processes differently. Finally, although the frequent changes in administration are fairly representative of what many schools endure, the stops and starts associated with this necessitated a mid-stream change in the focus of

this research. Rather than document what happened when one vision for student involvement was attempted, I documented what occurred as leadership changes transpired and projects begun were no longer in operation.

Possible areas for additional study in this area might include more on the roles of student-researchers and establishing additional opportunities for these students and others to be involved in data gathering and presentation of findings. Part of this exploration could center on the empowerment of student-researchers in this process and the effects that they perceived that it had on them as they progressed through school and on into college and/or careers. Another area for further consideration would be holding focus groups with teachers or conducting a survey so that a larger population was represented. The content of this additional research with teachers could ask more specifically about their expectations for administrator, teacher, and student roles; their views about student involvement; how and/or if student involvement had impacted them; and what they considered to be the intended and unintended consequences of student participation in restructuring dialogues. Finally, I would have liked to have conducted in-depth interviews with individual students to hear more about their views toward student leadership and participation in restructuring dialogues. The views that I heard in this research were either through the focus groups, through observations of activities and events, or through informal discussions that I had with students at the school. Although I feel that this has been a thorough study that has offered valuable insights for the school studied, for the district in which it is situated, and for other schools that might be contemplating increased student involvement, the above-mentioned areas would offer additional insights that could add more depth to the findings.

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